

SOMALAY  
alias  
S. M. L. LAKSHMANAN CHETTIAR

**CHETTIARS AND HINDUSIM IN  
SOUTH-EAST ASIA**  
(A SEMINAR PAPER)

**SOMALAY**  
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## SECTION II: REPORTS OF SEMINARS AND LECTURES

The Institute of Traditional Cultures, University Buildings, Madras-5 conducted two seminars on 'Chettiars and Hinduism in South-East Asia' (1st December 1971) and 'Non-Aryan Elements in Rig Veda' (16th February 1972) respectively in room No. 48 of the University Departmental Buildings. The following is a report of the proceedings of the seminars:

### CHETTIARS AND HINDUISM IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

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*Leaders :*

*Esteemed Director and Friends,*

I am happy to lead in this seminar.

I am aware of the work of the Institute of Traditional Cultures, viz. of disseminating information relating to the cultures of the countries of South and South-East Asia. The subject of this paper falls well within the scope of the Institute's work.

My happiness also arises from the fact that I am speaking today under the presidency of my own teacher, Dr. K. K. Pillay, a great historian.

Today is Thiru Kārthigai Deepam day; a day of illumination and of special importance to Lord Subramanya and my paper too deals mostly with the temples for this deity.

Like the term 'Middle East', the term 'South-East Asia' too, became popular during World War II. For the purpose of this paper, we are taking into account Hinduism in Ceylon, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Viet Nam, Thailand and Indonesia, and it is to refer to these countries that we are using the general term 'South-East Asia'.

Hinduism owes its present status and importance in South-East Asia to the deep faith of the various Hindu groups living there, to the activities (in a few places) of Śrī Rāmakrishna Mission, the Divine Life Society etc. Along with these, the role of the Chettiars has been significant in making Hinduism a live

force in the spiritual and cultural affairs of various countries. In making this study, we are not underrating the services of other groups. Ours is only an academic and objective approach.

The Chettiars or Nāṭṭukkottai Nagarathars of Chettinād (in Tamil Nādu) are overseas traders and (after mid-19th century) bankers. Religion is the basis of their community organization. Every Chettiar belongs to one of the nine temple-circles and marriages have to be registered at the appropriate temple-circles in prescribed manner and time.

To quote Dr. Philip Siegelman "huge sums were expended by the Chettiars for temple construction, the gilding of the temples of Tanjore and South India and the purchase of lands in the Cauvery delta, whose incomes sustained and still sustain, the temple trusts of many of South India's most opulent temples.....they are still thought of as financial wizards in the administration of temple lands and funds..... Chettiar contributions to the support and construction of temples was often so seemingly legendary (wealthy men would deliberately court and often experience financial ruin in such projects) that it approaches hyperbole."<sup>1</sup>

Chettiars are ardent Hindus and are devotees of Śiva. Not a single Chettiar is a Vaiṣṇavite. According to one scholar, they practise tithing to Śiva rather than Viṣṇu, because Viṣṇu gives his blessings to his devotees only by making them virtuous, while Śiva gives pecuniary and material prosperity.

There is not even a single case of Chettiar conversion from Hinduism to other religions, in spite of the fact that some of them have married outside the Hindu fold and live in countries where Hinduism is not the predominant religion. This is particularly important, since almost all the Hindus who were settled in Malaysia by the Pallava and Choḷa rulers embraced Islam in the 15th century.

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1. (*Religion and Economic Activity: The Chettiars of Madras*—paper read at Washington D. C. at the 6th annual meeting of the International Society for the study of under-developed Economies, 1964).

In Indonesia, for instance, the continuous flow of Hindu migrants from the first to the twelfth century shaped Indonesian culture and deeply influenced its civilisation. Indonesia finally passed to Islam in the 15th century. And Islam too went to Indonesia from India.

In Ceylon, a Hindu trading community embraced Christianity. They are all Catholics and are called "Colombo Chetties" to distinguish them from the Chettiars.

Even while staying abroad, the Chettiars have their moorings in India by keeping regular contacts with temples in Tamil Nāḍu, through particular families of priests. They make generous donations for renovation of temples in India and when they visit India, usually once in three years, they make it a point to go on pilgrimage to various temples in South India. Some Chettiars from Burma used to come to Chettinad via Vāraṇāsi.

Chettiar activity in religion has extended to various States of India; their connections with the Viśvanāth Temple at holy Vāraṇāsi are close, continuous and significant. Abroad, the Chettiars have built the Miṇakshi Chockalingam temple in Mauritius over a century ago. Currently a Hindu Temple project is under way in New York city and a Chettiar (Dr. A. Alagappa, Chief of the Water Resources section of the United Nations) is the prime mover of the project.

Everywhere the Chettiars went to South-East Asia, they sponsored the construction of Hindu Temple in the important places where they have settled permanently or for business purposes. Besides attending to their profession, the only thing to which the Chettiars devote their time and money is religious activity. Their pattern of daily life, generally, is orthodox and the older men perform Siva Pūja every morning. Footwear cannot be worn in the business premises.

The temples built by the Chettiars are medium-sized. They are not very huge structures; there is no thousand-pillared hall or even a hundred-pillared hall in any of them. But they are con-

spicuous landmarks in those towns because of their Dravidian architecture and Rājagopuram or gateway-towers noted for their grace and harmony, colour and form. They are well kept, neat and tidy.

These temples are of recent origin having been built in the second half of the 19th century; so they are not hoary shrines figuring in song, story and legend. Still the local people have great attachment to these temples and in recent years, visiting scholars and saints have composed hymns on some of them e. g. Kambai Sannadhi Murai.

In most cases, the whole Chettiar community and not just one individual family doing business in that locality, undertakes the job of building a temple and maintaining it. There are exceptions to this rule e. g. Selva Vināyakar Kōvil, Kandy, Ceylon, to which particular reference will be made later.

Valuable jewellery and silver chariots have been provided for the temples. Flower gardens are maintained. The temple establishment includes Paṇḍāram priests, Ōdhuvārs to sing divine songs and musicians to play the Nāḍhasvaram.

The endowments are all by Chettiars. However, others too, make small voluntary contributions during festivals by depositing cash into the temple Hundi as thanks-giving offering for boons conferred by the deity, for curing ailments and for giving them a high standard of living.

The members of the community contribute annually certain percentage ( $\frac{1}{2}$  of 1% usually) of their capital invested in business (not property) for the maintenance of these temples.

Another source of income is the proceeds of sale in auction on the last day of every festival, token offerings of small items of jewellery etc. donated by beneficiaries. The Chettiars buy in such auctions, auspicious articles, viz turmeric, betel leaf, lime fruit etc. at fancy prices. The Almighty is believed to bless the buyers with a prosperous and peaceful year.

Management of the temples is by rotation among various Chettiar groups according to well-established conventions. Usually, it rotates among the various groups of business houses. In each building or *kiddangy*, the senior-most business house is powerful, The others too try their level best to get the management in turn and since temple management involves a lot of money, they go all out to get it even by giving security, if so desired. It turns out to be an issue of prestige. Instances are not wanting where a junior brother buys office space in another *kiddangy* to secure the chance of managing the temple at least once in his life-time. There is no Hindu Religious Endowment Board in these countries ; but the entire community of Chettiars acts as an inspectorate and there are no serious cases of misappropriation. The accounts are an open book audited by the entire community ; when a business goes default, the temple investments are the first charge on the assets.

Annual festivals are held in these temples. Important among these are Thai Pūsam in Singapore, Penang, Rangoon and Saigon, Ādivel in Ceylon etc. During these festivals, the deity is taken to a nearby place on the outskirts of the cities (e. g. Pasumandan near Rangoon, Vellavetta near Colombo, Unuvattunai near Galle). Feeding the poor folk of *all* religions is an important item of these celebrations. Religiously inspired honesty has characterised the dealings of the Chettiars.

The temples are usually consecrated to Lord Subramanya, popularly known as Murugan. The men versatile in Āgamās are few and far between in the overseas countries and so it is much easier to maintain a Subramanya temple than a Śiva temple. Also it can be initially put up with just a picture or by planting a Vēl (a weapon in the armoury of Lord Subramanya). The social life of the Chettiars revolves around the temples. It is in the temples that Chettiars welcome dignitaries, hold meetings of a business nature, fix rates of interest etc. No meeting will have a Chairman ; for Lord Subramanya also called affectionately the ‘Chetty Murugan’ is regarded as Chairman for any community meeting.



The icons are made in India by reputed sthapthis in consultation with heads of mutts viz. H. H. Sankarāchārya Swāmigal of Kāñchi Kāmakōṭi Pitham. Services of qualified persons are requisitioned from India to perform re-dedication ceremonies, installation of vigrahas etc.

In South India, a tank and a temple go together. In between them, long rows of beggars stand or sit awaiting small coins from temple-goers. These scenes are hard to find outside India.

In most temples there are wells, bath-rooms, sanitary facilities and plentiful supply of clean water through pipes.

### CEYLON

*The Thiruketheeswaram temple*, 32 K. M. from Talaimannar on the Western coast of Ceylon, in the village of Mantota, is one of the two most sacred pre-historic temples in Ceylon which have been referred to in classical literature and have received laudatory hymns from Śaiva saints. The other is Konesvara temple at Trincomallee.

According to legend, Thiruketheeswaram Temple was worshipped by Rāvaṇa and Prince Vijaya, the founder of the Sinhala race, known to the ancients as "Mathottam". Modern Thiruketheeswaram was the one and only Ceylonese port which had trade links with Greece and Rome. The Portuguese destroyed this temple in the 17th century. Just as Rameswaram is so called because Rāma worshipped there, Ketheeswaram owes its name to the worship here by Kethu.

The following account is from *Thiruketheeswaram papers* compiled, edited and published by Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan in 1957. (Page No. 13):

"The original site of the Temple, which had been razed to the ground, was traced in June, 1894 from the clue afforded by the old well on the Temple land. The Śivalingam which was in worship in pre-Portuguese period, a Nandi and a Ganesha image were discovered near the old foundations of what is believed to be the old Temple site.

“The Naddukoddai Chettiers both in Jaffna and in Colombo took an interest in this Temple from the beginning. Subsequently, the Temple itself came under the management of the Old and New Kathiresan Temples of Colombo. At present, it is under the management of a Panchayat of the Thiruketheeswaram Temple Restoration Society on which, by a rule of the Society, the two Colombo Temples will always have representation.”

Similar tributes have been paid to the Chettiar community and to individual Chettiar like Mr. Palaniappa Chettiar for their work in Thiruketheeswaram in a journal called *Indu Sadhanam* in its issue of 13th Margazhi 1893 and in Mr. N. Kailasa Pillai's foreword to a publication on Thiruketheeswaram Temple in 1935.

According to a letter received by me from Swami Saravanamuthu of Eezhathu Sivanadiyar Thirukootam, it was Mr. RM. AR. Palaniappa Chettiar who came forward to buy the land (jungle where the temple lay hidden and in pieces) to the extent of 40 acres, in a public auction. Again, it was the Chettiers who arranged to get a Shiva Linga from Vāranāsi and to perform a *kumbhabishekam* on 28th June 1903. The management of the temple then passed on to the Chettiers who were doing business in Madambe; on March 1, 1919 they transferred the management to the old and new Kathiresan temples of the Chettiers in Colombo. During their management (which lasted till 1951), they purchased and donated 80 acres of agricultural land to the temple. As the income was insufficient to maintain the establishment, the Chettiers met the salaries of the priests, an accountant and an orderly. In the farm, a big bore-well was constructed and drinking water was supplied from it to the temple through a pipe system.

A local committee is managing the temple from 1952. It includes two Chettiers to represent the old and the new Kathiresan temples. When the Chettiers came into the scene, it was just a jungle in British possession. When they handed over the management to the local committee, in 1951, there was a well-built temple with endowments worth Rs. ten lakhs.

The Chettiers have built in Thiruketheeswaram, a resthouse for pilgrims, priority of accommodation being given for Chettiers,

*Selva Vināyakar Temple, Kandy:* This temple is situated in Kattukkele in the business district of Kandy, an ancient capital of Ceylon famous for its Buddhist 'Temple of Tooth'. It is one of Ceylon's major Hindu temples and is run on the lines of big Devasthanams in India, as will be evident from the calendar of festivals published by the management.

It is said to have been built in about 1800 by a single Chettiar family of Devakottai who had business in Kandy under the name and style of "AR. L. SV. N."

The main shrine is for Vināyaka or Ganesh. Sub-temples have been constructed for Somasundaram-Minakshi and for the Goddess Kālī.

In about 1940, the said family wound up its business in Ceylon and left the island. However, the temple goes on from strength to strength, thanks mainly to the income it derives by way of rent from (i) a few houses and (ii) 40 shops being real estate both endowed by the family to the temple. The annual budget of the temple exceeds Rs. 60,000/-.

Five kilometres from Kandy is Thennakumpāra on the banks of the Mahavaliganga River. Here the temple's flowergardens and coconut groves (seven acres in extent) are situated, as also a chapel for Vināyaka. To this site, the deities from the temple at Kandy go in ceremonial procession for the Panguni Uttiram festival in March-April, in three decorated chariots - all donated by the family referred to. The expenses for the festival are met by a society known as "Hindu Ma Manram of the Central Province."

The temple's establishment includes among others five Pandārams and four Brahmin priests.

The Temple of the Tooth celebrates in July - August, a month-long Buddhist festival called the Prahara. On the last day, Buddhists go to the Mahavaliganga to fetch large quantities of river-water which is stored in the Selva Vināyakar temple. The eleven Trustees of the Buddhist shrine, known locally as Thisava, worship at the Selva Vināyakar temple, accept temple honours and leave

in a procession (seated on elephants) to the Temple of the Tooth. Visits of Sinhalese and Muslims is a daily sight in the Selva Vināyakar Temple.

*Trincomallee*: Chettiars' connection with Trincomallee, the other Ceylonese shrine sung in Thevāram, is not as close as that with Thiruketheesvaram. Negotiations are currently underway to gift a very big silver chariot from the Chettiar Trust in Galle to this temple.

*Katargama*: Katargama is a great shrine in south-central Ceylon, worshipped by the Sinhalese as well as the Hindus. A big festival is celebrated there in the month of Adi, (July-August) in praise of Lord Subramanya. Two weeks before the festival, groups of Chettiars leave Colombo on foot with His lance or Vēl. Some of them carry the Kāvadi. This trek of nearly two hundred miles, part of it in hilly terrain in jungle country shouting loudly 'Arōhara' is arduous. Only utter devotion and faith sustain the marchers who escape unhurt by elephants and other wild life. Waves of change sweep every activity; as a result, the ceremonial march to Katargama was left to the will of individuals. Replicas of Katargama were built in Bampalapitita and Wellavatta, (five and six miles respectively from Sea Street, Colombo) and called *Upayakatargama*. The community's march now ends here.

In Katargama itself, the Chettiars had built a Nagara Madam with a chapel for the Lord of Katargama. Katargama has since been declared a holy city and all shops and buildings within the notified area have been demolished in March/April 1971. Compensation has been given in kind by allotting equal area of land on the south eastern side of the river. The Chettiars are hesitating to build a new their Nagara Madam in the site now offered.

*The Sea Street Temples*: The Sea Street in Colombo has been the Wall Street of Ceylon for 150 years as the centre of its rice supplies, its business in jewellery and its banking activity. The Chettiars dominated the scene.

The Chettiars had built a temple in Sea Street in about 1820. There was competition in endowment and management and the temple was more or less controlled by Chettiars mostly from Devakottai and Okkur. It is since called the old Kathiresan temple.

The others, mostly rice suppliers to estates, decided in 1880 to build a new temple; all new business entrants to Colombo were to be admitted to this temple only. Hence the name New Kathiresan Temple.

Both temples have functioned smoothly and without friction, competition being confined to overdoing the festivals. The festivals are conducted by the temples, separately in alternate years. The old temple had a wooden chariot; the "new rich" of the new temple constructed a chariot in silver at a cost of Rs. 1½ lakhs. The authorities of the old temple did not want to be outwitted. Sentiment would not allow them to discard the wooden chariot for old is gold. So they plated the old one with gold and old really became gold.

Both temples have very valuable jewellery, priceless gems, silver endowments, flower-gardens and vast properties.

The temples jointly supported other Hindu temples in the Pettah area. To cite an instance, they arranged poor feeding annually in April-May in the Vināyaka temple maintained in Sea Street by the Jaffna Tamils. A Chettiar family (பெரி.செ.கு.) gave large endowments to the Mettu Theru Subramania Swami Temple near Sea Street.

*Ādi Vēl Festival* has come to be celebrated as the universal festival of all Ceylonese. To the Chettiar Temples in Sea Street, this is the greatest religious event of the year and for the duration of the festival period, business takes a holiday. Even banks and certain offices declare a holiday.

With fanfare, publicity, illumination etc., the festival has become a carnival. After Maheśvara Pūja, the Chettiars and other devotees assemble at the Sea Street temple from where the deity is

taken in a grand procession on a chariot with its glittering lance along principal Streets. The procession starts early morning, making its way inch by inch and reaching Bempalapitiye or Wellawetta late in the evening.

The deity camps there for three days giving 'dharshan' to thousands of pilgrims of all faiths. Sumptuous food is provided for devotees as well as for the poor.

On the evening of the fourth day, the massive return procession commences amidst scenes of great excitement. The Governor-General, the Prime Minister, Ambassadors and the Sinhalese commoner all participate in it. Offerings are made to the deity in cash, in Hundi boxes kept at the camp-temple and carried right through the procession until it reaches Sea Street in the small hours of the morning.

In July-August 1971, Ceylon passed through a period of emergency due to violent political activity of a kind hitherto unknown in our part of the world. As a result, the Chettians were not keen on celebrating the Ādi Vēl Festival. They would not take any risks. But Government came forward to offer them all possible protection and insisted on the festival being held as usual. And everything went off cordially and without hitch or trouble.

*Negombo (Neer-Kolumbu):* The Chettians have built a Māri-  
amman Temple here and it is well-endowed with flower gardens  
and real estate. The Navarātri and Thai Pūṣam Festivals are  
celebrated.

*Galle:* The Chettiar temple for Subramanya at the port-town  
of Galle on the way from Colombo to Katargama is one of the  
well-endowed temples in Ceylon. For the Katargama Festival the  
deity is taken to a campsite at Unuvattunai, 5 K. Ms. from Galle.

*Ratnapure:* Chettians had business in this gem-town until 1950.  
The temple for Subramanya was constructed at nearby Thirūānaik-  
katti and the deity was brought to Ratnapure during the Thai  
Pūṣam festival. The temple and its properties have since been  
handed over to local Hindus for maintenance.

*Navalapittie*: The Chettiar Temple for Subramanya known locally as Kathiresan Kovil is noted for its daily rituals. Its main sources are rentals from real estate. In 1969 a pillared hall with seating capacity for 750 persons was constructed.

*Gampola* (Kampalai): The Kathiresan temple here was built by the Chettiars and well-endowed through annual donations. The deity is worshipped by the Sinhalese and referred to by them as 'Kathirkamo Dheyyo' (கதிர்காமோ தெய்யோ) or Deity of Kataragama. The festival deity is used at Thai Pūṣam festival. Any number of people used to be fed on the occasion. With permanent funds shrinking after the exodus of Chettiars from Ceylon, hundi collections have become a major item of revenue.

The members of the other communities have come forward to conduct many festivals and to foot the bill every year. The festival calendar lists the donors.

*Mathampai*: The Chettiar group here was never large. They contented themselves by building a compact temple for Ganesh and endowed it adequately.

*Kurunakal*: Endowed with coconut estates, the Kathiresan Temple here is noted for Panguni Uttaram festival. In 1971 a gateway tower was built thanks to donations mainly from Chettiars.

*Padura*: This is a small place near Mt. Lavina. The Chettiars of Devakottai are said to have built the Katargama Temple here. The priest is a Sinhalese. Local people carry Kāvadis and roll down on earth to circumambulate the temple.

*Pussella*: The Kathiresan Temple here is known for its Māsi Magam festival and poor feeding.

*Jaffna*: Before World War I, Jaffna was a prominent centre of Chettiar business activity in rice, being the port for import from Rangoon, Akyab and Nagapattinam. In those days they had built a Siva temple (now referred to as Chetty Sivankovil) in Vannarponnai and a Kathiresan Kovil nearby. In the latter the main event is Chitra Festival in April-May.

*Munisvaram* is 11 K.M. from Mathampi. There is a Nagara-viduthi here; on the full moon day of Āvaṇi the month—long ‘Ther’ (car) festival is concluded with poor feeding.

*Miscellaneous:* Chettiars have also sponsored the visits of religious leaders from India to Ceylon. On one such occasion Mr. S. Sivasubramanian, a leading Proctor and Notary and Secretary, Śaiva Paripālana Samājam wrote to a leading member of the community as under (on 1st June 1953).

“The Hindu Public must be greatly thankful to Nagarathar community and to you for the immense benefit you are giving to us by making arrangements for the Swamiji’s visit”.

The Chettiars also undertook pilgrimages to Sivanadipatham (Adam’s Peak) to have a look at Sun-rise and Sun-set in this hill-station-cum-Śaivite shrine.

### BURMA

Burma was the most important and prosperous area of Chettiar investment from 1850 to the outbreak of World War II in the Far East. Naturally, it was here that Chettiar temples were built in a large number of places. Important among these are shore temple-centres at 62 places. They also built a Viṣṇu temple at Kanbe, near Rangoon.

Another feature is that the Chettiars in Burma financed the daily rituals at Viśvanāth Temple, Vāraṇasī from 1934 to 1962. For this purpose they collected Mahamai all over Burma among the Chettiar firms on Thai Pūsam Day. The fund thus secured was managed by the Śrī Kāśi Nāttukkoṭṭai Nagara Chatram Managing Society.

In 1933 the executive committee of the Chettiars Association of Burma decided to open all the 62 Chettiar temples in Burma to Harijans.

The daily life of the Chettiars in Burma has been very religious. Chettiar integrity was an accepted fact among Burmese, partly because of Chettiar system of accounting and tallying of book



balance with cash on hand and partly because of the deep impression they created among ordinary Burmese folk (men as well as women) by their profound religious way of life.

The 62 temples referred to catered to the needs of all the Chettiars in Burma, some of them having their jurisdiction over neighbouring villages, e.g. the temple at Nyaunglabin (in Pegu District) covered Chettiar businessmen in Dobi, Painjulo, Charuttaka and Choochin. With mahamai funds from these places, the temple was managed by the men at the headquarters. Tamils as well as Burmese were fed on every Kārthigai Day. A Paṇḍāram priest was in charge of the services to the Pillāyar (stone idol) and Dandāyuthapāṇi (bronze) images. The latter deity was taken in procession in town at the Māṣi Maham festival.

Throughout Burma, the *Burmese* used to adorn the deities of Chettiar temples with silk clothes on festive occasions.

In a place called Soombiyo, the Chettiars used to organise annually a big festival in honour of Buddha in co-operation with Buddhist monks, Burmese officers etc., for three days in the month of November. They hosted a big dinner to the entire elite and arranged Burmese dramas and variety entertainments.

In Kanbe, the Chettiars fed one and all on Kārthigai day at the Subramanya Temple belonging to the entire Tamil population of Burma.

In Henzada, the Chettiars paid for and managed the major Burmese festivals. In return, the Burmese visited the Chettiar temple on Fridays and Mondays. The Burmese had great faith in the intermediary priest of Chettiar temple and used to seek from him forecasts regarding fluctuations in the price of paddy, their staple crop. On many occasions, the predictions turned out to be accurate.

The temple escaped unhurt during heavy Japanese bombing and this miracle added to Burmese faith in the deity and the priest.

Another area of Chettiar activity was Akyab, an important port near Indian (now Bangla Desh) border. The Kathiresān temple is situated a furlong from the river port.

Since the last century, it has been noted for rice trade as well as banking. It was a transit centre, importing surplus rice from Thanjavur delta, Viet Nam and Burma and selling them to chronically deficit areas in undivided Bengal, N. E. India and Ceylon in specially chartered ships. There were 30 Chettiar business houses and they had all their offices under one roof. The first floor of this large building, housed the temple, quite a substantial one.

The main festival was Māśi Maham. That day was a bank holiday in Akyab. The deity was carried in a small silver chariot to Tamase, 8 K.M. away.

The prosperity of businessmen here can be inferred from the saying 'Arikan Palaniappa, alāruthada un thanthi' i.e. Palaniappa of Akyab, the entire telegraph line is thundering with your telegrams about chartered ships. The reference is to M. M. PL. மெ, மொ, பழ family of Nemathanpatti who renovated and enlarged the beautiful Subramanya Temple atop the hill at Virali-malai, Trichy district. The Chettiar community at Akyab also maintained a comfortable rest house and chapel at Chittagong where their representatives used to go periodically on business visits.

*Rangoon:* The Chettiar temple in Rangoon - the richest of all Hindu temples in Burma - is managed by a trust elected periodically. The Rangoon Nāttukkoṭṭai Chettiars Temple Trust was formed in 1935 and is still functioning. It maintains—

- (1) the Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi Temple in Ararai in 112-122, Moghul street.;
- (2) the Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi Temple in Paśumandan
- (3) a religious Mutt at Kanbe, 6 miles from Rangoon.

Under its auspices, the Thai Pūṣam, the biggest Hindu festival of Burma, is celebrated in a grand manner with processions of the deity from Rangoon to Paśumandan and *vice-versa*. Poor feeding

on a large scale, music performances and religious plays, are all part of the gāla festival. Thevāram recitals are also arranged. Films on South Indian temples are shown at these festivals by the Indian Embassy in co-operation with the Revolutionary Government of Burma. Well-to-do Hindus of all castes used to breed good bullocks to get the privilege of their bulls drawing the silver chariot of the deity.

The deities are adorned with costly jewellery and "abishekas" are performed. Food cooked for the deity at temple kitchen is distributed as 'prasādam' to the devotees. There is also special feeding for all the participants, apart from poor feeding.

The Ararai Temple is said to have been constructed in 1890; it is more a private chapel than a public temple since it is on the first floor of a three storey mansion. It has acquired great sanctity because it is the meeting-place of all Chettiars in Burma and momentous decisions have been taken here. On arrival in Burma and departure for India, Chettiars have worshipped here. The annual ceremonies for deceased ancestors are also offered here. The Pillayār Nōnbu festival in December - a type of Chettiar Ganesh Chaturthi - too is held here in great solemnity.

The daily services are elaborate in detail and the attendance is large and representative. The jewellery is heavy and costly and the deity is dressed and adorned by connoisseurs of the art.

The Daṇḍāyuthapaṇi Temple at Paṣumandan is said to have been built around 1900, with Rajagopuram etc. complete and adjoining the temple, is the spacious mutt built with a large banqueting hall to feed huge numbers of people at the monthly Kārthikai festivals, the annual Thai Pūṣam festival etc. and an auditorium to hold religious discourses and cultural performances. The temple was damaged during Japanese bombing (1942). The idols were immediately shifted to the neighbouring Chettiar Mutt which served as an interim temple or Bālālayam. The temple has since been completely re-built at a cost of one and a half lakhs of rupees. Construction was completed in 1967 and the new edifice has been consecrated. To quote Dr. Philip Siegelman "For

a group which is expecting imminent withdrawal, this is a remarkable act."

The Trust has invited from Tamil Nādu several scholars to deliver religious lectures. It has lavishly supported the Siddhi Vināyakar Temple in the 24th street, the Kāli Amman Temple near the market, Samarasa Samājam etc. - premier organisation of Hindus in Rangoon. The managements of those bodies have in recent years come forward to give the Trust representation in their executive committees.

The Trust has contributed generously to the 2500th anniversary celebrations of Buddha and similar worthy causes.

The Trust's funds arose from Mahamai donations (collected at Thai Pūṣam until 1950) which have since accumulated.

The Chettiars have provided endowments to the Hanumān Temple run by the Mārwaris in "Bhagavandas House", to the Jain Temple of the Gujarathis and to the Sule Pagoda, the Shwe Dagon Pagoda and other Buddhist shrines. Chettiars visited these pagodas and worshipped there.

The Perumāḷ (Vaishṇava) Temple in 51st street was founded by a Reddiar gentleman of Thiruvānaikovil (whose family founded the Sithambara Reddiar High School in Rangoon). They entrusted to S. T. P. C. RM. ச. தே. பா. சி. ராம. Firm of Pellatur (who had their business office at Reddiar Mansions 59/61 Moghul Street) the management of this temple.

*Moulmein*: This is a Burmese port known for its rice and timber exports. It was the first Chettiar settlement in Burma. Chettiar contact with Moulmein dates to a period before the British conquest of Burma.

The Chettiar Temple is situated in 214 Lower Main Road which runs parallel to the neighbouring Strand Road. The Lance or Vēl of Lord Subramanya is installed there and it is dressed to give the look of the deity - Lord Subramanya. A Paṇḍāram priest performs two services daily.

The image is covered with gold on festival days and taken round on Thai Pūṣam day along the business area of Moulmein in a silver chariot. Stops are made at street junctions, entrances to saw-mills and door-steps of business houses to facilitate worship by one and all. The journey ends at Diango, (five K.M. from Moulmein) where the deity camps for the duration of the festival.

20 K.M. from Moulmein is Śiva Sthalam (Sowthalom in Burmese) which is a hill with a Subramanya temple on top. Here different visions of the deity can be had as in Cinerama. Burmese, as well as as the large Tamil agricultural labour population of the Moulmein and Thaton districts pierce their tongues with silver pins and dance kāvadi and vėl to get the blessings of Lord Subramanya. To help this piercing of pins experienced persons were brought from the Subramanya shrine at Ettugudi near Nāga-paṭṭiṇam. At the foot of the hill, pilgrims of all castes and creeds are fed free in the Chettiar mutt. Chettiars have made liberal endowments to the hill temple.

On prescribed days, Chettiars of Moulmein used to have baths at Chykmyo (Tamil - Thekkumathi) 44 miles from Moulmein at the confluence of the Moulmein River and the sea.

The Chettiar temple at Moulmein is one of the major Hindu temples in Burma. The artisans who were brought from India in connection with the construction of the temple became agents of Chettiar banking firms, later on. Another noteworthy feature is that Burmans in Moulmein area are more Hindu than Buddhist in their outlook and way of life.

In Burma, there is not even a single Chettiar left in the mofussil i.e. outside Rangoon. There is a crying need to make a survey of the situation regarding conduct of services in the temples and the use made of temple properties and jewellery, left by the Chettiars. In some places, the vast properties are left uncared for. In others, they are said to be inadequately used or even misused. The Government of India and all Hindus should evince interest in the subject and take steps for proper utilisation of the resources for the objects for which they were created. The

number of Chettiars still living in Rangoon is just a dozen and so they have lost their missionary zeal and representative status. The affairs of the temples need to be looked into.

### SINGAPORE

The Chettiar Temple in Tank Street was established on the fourth of April 1859. It has the look of a great South Indian temple. It is considered to be the richest among the Hindu temples outside India. The spiritual atmosphere also is that of the grand temples of South India. It is "efficiently managed" (see, *Singapore Hindus Religious and Cultural Seminar—1969-71—* pp. 183-184).

The impression it makes on visitors - Indian political leaders, eminent British writers, tourists from the world over - is profound. Many prominent authors have been struck by the Thai Pūsam festival and have devoted pages to it in their books. It is as important and gay as the big festivals at Palani, Thiruchendūr or Tiruttani.

At this and other festivals in this temple, Sikhs as well as Chinese dance with kavadis and do walking over the fire seeking the infinite mercy of Lord Subramania or Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi. At least a few Sikhs and Chinese can be seen in the temple any day, any time. One striking feature is that even those Hindus who do not frequent temples in India visit this temple regularly in Singapore from the day of disembarkation or landing to the day of their leaving Singapore.

The gold-plated peacock-shaped chariot is used to carry the deity inside the temple in procession on Kārthigai days.

The chief deities are Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi (Main Deity) Aimbuvināyakar and Idumban. The other deities are Sundareswarar, Sithi Vināyakar, Mīnākshi Amman, Dakṣiṇāmūṛthy, Chandikeswar, Nadarājar, Sivakāmi, Vairavar and Navagrahams. The Navarātri also is a great event in this temple. The deity is very artistically dressed every day of the festival and a cultural programme is

offered in the evenings, embracing every aspect of music and dance.

### MALAYSIA

There are 16 important temples built by Chettiars in Malaysia, spread out in Alor Star, Sunkurumbai, Kuala Lumpur, Muar, Kulim, Taiping, Sāvi, Batu Pahat, Penang, Ipoh, Seremban, Killan, Valāppur, Teluk Anson, Malacca and Tappa, besides chapels in Chettiar-owned rubber estates and tin-mines. All these are for Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi. In addition to these, the Chettiars are managing the following temples :

Siva Temple, Penang.

Selva Vināyagar Temple, Seremban

Poyyatha Vināyagar Temple, Malacca

Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi Temple, Bari Pundhar.

The fact that others handed over their temples to the Chettiars for maintenance speaks about the devotion of the group and the esteem in which they are held by the people among whom they live.

All the temples are beautiful and imposing structures, built as a labour of love and devotion to the Almighty. Rome was not built in a day. In about 1810, when Chettiars first reached Malaysia in strength they planted the Lance of Lord Subramanya in their places of business. Later on, construction of temples was thought of. It was spread over several stages. Many temples were built brick by brick and there was not much of stone-work. Granite cut stone is not used there. New structures were added to, whenever rubber and tin prices shot up. These are all concrete masonry works.

The temples are built in Dravidian architectural style, the distinct individuality of Hindu temples which are the pride of South India. So these magnificent edifices with Rājagopurams on top of the gateways are a landmark in every part of Malaysia and they attract the attention of one and all, the permanent resi-

dents as well as fleeting visitors. They are not Ārupadai-vīdus or traditionally famous temples; but each of them is important in its own right. Enough land for expansion, suitable buildings, more than sufficient jewellery, liquid funds and real estate adequate to meet recurring expenditure - all these have been provided. There is ample light and ventilation in the temple. So no one perspires even in the sanctum sanctorum. What is more important is that the temples are neat and tidy. This is due to the high standards of sanitation, personal cleanliness and living of the people in Malaysia.

We do not find in the temples in Malaysia sign boards such as: Don't spit here. Leave your shoes at the entrance to the temple. Don't waste holy ash, and kumkum. Don't apply remnants of sandal paste to temple walls and pillars.

There is no need for such requests there.

The priest offers a very small quantity of holy ash and so it cannot be wasted.

The camphor used for the worship and the milk poured over the idols for abishekam are all of high quality and purity. It is a serene experience to observe the worship at close quarters.

The number of daily worshippers is substantial even in small places e.g. Killan. This includes people of all races as also Sikhs and Buddhists. At festivals, the crowds are huge and participants include people from all walks of life, officials, local gentry, businessmen and labourers. In each festival 2 to 3 thousand persons are fed free. Crackers play a great part in these festivals and there is an attempt to out-do the Chinese in their use of crackers for their New Year's Day.

The attendance at temples in normal days as also on festival days includes Harijans. There is no prohibition of their entry into temples and there is very little discrimination against them in the social life of Malaysia. Their living standard is high and they—particularly the barbers—are an effective and powerful group. Madrasi barbers are respected all over Malaysia and



Singapore for their professional ability and 5-starred hotels consider it a privilege to have them on their establishment. They refer to it with pride in their advertisements.

Returning to the subject of festivals, Thai Pūṣam is celebrated in Penang. The other temples share between them Chitra Pournami, Vaikāsi Viśākam, Ādi Vel, Āvani Caturthi, Thiru Kārthigai, Mārgazhi Thiruvāthirai, Māsi Makam and Panguni Utsavam and so all the year round there are festivals. Many Chettiars try to mark attendance at all these festivals.

These temples are utilised as community centres also by being the venue for non-controversial meetings and of marriages. The priest officiating at the marriages as master of ceremonies does not have adequate knowledge of mantras and often tape-records of such mantras (brought from India) are used.

Management of the temples is in the hands a trustee elected every year from among the contributors of Mahamai. Trusteeship involves great responsibility and is a coveted honour. If conferring trusteeship to anyone is hesitated for any reason, the claimant establishes his credentials to the satisfaction of the entire community and gains the trusteeship.

In all religious activities, the Chettiars have co-operated with other Hindus — of Indian as well as Ceylonese origin. As instances, I may point to the sponsorship of visits of religious leaders and theological scholars, of the organisation of the Śaiva Siddhānta Samāja Conference in Malaysia and of the conduct of Siddhānta classes in Kuala Lumpur, Seramban and other places.

### MALACCA

Malacca is an ancient town, a prosperous port and in the words of well-known writer "one of the strongholds of Chettiars" in Malaysia.

In about 1900 the Chettiars proposed to build a temple in Malacca. A local community known as Malacca Chettis is

believed to have emigrated from Tamil Nādu, a thousand years ago. They have since given up the language. They suggested that instead of putting up a new temple, the Chettiars could take over the existing one. They had earlier sold their Drowpadi Amman Temple to the Jaffna Tamils for a token price of one Malayan dollar.

The Poyyatha Vināyagar temple of the Malacca Chetty Community is said to have been built in 1781, in land alienated for the purpose by the then Dutch rulers. They gave it to the Nāttukkoṭṭai Chettiars for management and maintenance.

The Chettiars have added new structures and also put in a sub-temple for Śiva. The Chettiars also celebrate the Māṣi Makam festival at a cost of 1000\$ a year; so much so the temple is now referred to as a Chettiar temple. As desired by the young men of the Malacca Chetty community, a sign Board has been put up in 1966 to show that the temple is the 'property of Malacca Chetty community.'

The Chettiars take the idol of Subramanya or Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi from this temple to Sannāsimalai in ceremonial procession for the annual festival and feed 5,000 persons on that day.

### *SANNĀSIMALAI*

Eight K. M. from Malacca is Sannāsimalai. A holy person said to be a Bengali had put up a Śiva Linga there. At his request, the Chettiars formed a committee to administer it. Later they collected money from among themselves to purchase properties and to construct a silver chariot.

To enable the maintenance of the temple from assured incomes, the Chettiars purchased nine acres of land; a part of it has been developed as a flower-garden for temple use. Rubber has been planted in 3 acres. Two hundred thousand Malaysian dollars have been spent on the expansion and renovation of the temple.

## KUALA LUMPUR

The capital of Malaysia is Kuala Lumpur. There is a large Hindu community here half of which is Indian Tamil group and another half Jaffna Tamil group from Ceylon. Common to all these Tamils is the Māriamman Temple, the oldest Hindu Temple in Malaysia. The Unesco is considering a proposal for technical aid for its preservation on the lines of their aid to Srirangam, Thanjavur and Ramesvaram Temples.

The important festival in the Māriamman Temple is Navarātri. The Chettiars bear all the expenses for the elaborate rituals on the sixth day of this festival.

The Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi Temple is owned and maintained by the Chettiar community of Kuala Lumpur. The management rotates once a year among all the Kiddangies in a serial order decided by lots. When all the Kiddangies have had their turn, the lots are again drawn for the next set of years, the number of years, being co-equal to that of the Kiddangies.

Within each Kiddangy the various firms doing business normally come to certain arrangement among themselves as to who should manage the affairs of the temple. Usually the senior-most (oldest) business house manages the temple. But every firm (including junior firms and new-comers) aspire for the honour. These claims are settled by natural consent and everything done to safeguard temple funds. Sometimes a compromise is effected by having *de jure* and *de facto* trustees.

Mahamai is collected at  $1\frac{1}{8}\%$  of the turnover of the business and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of  $1\%$  of the book-value of the properties (real estate).

Some of you may be aware of the fact that poet Kannadasan has sung on this temple, during his current visit.

## PENANG

I may quote the following:

“The Indian Community has its many temples, the most well-known being the Chettiar Temple in Waterfall Road. The annual

Thai Pūṣam festival attracts thousands of Hindus and sightseers of all religions and nationalities to this temple from all over Malaya and the Kāvadi, an ornamental piece of semi-circular bent wood decorated with pictures of Gods, which some of them carry in fulfillment of vows, with skewers stuck on body, cheek or tongues present a picture of Oriental belief in voluntary mortification of the flesh.

In Pitt Street is the Subramania Temple with a Gōpuram with intricately carved figures adorning the facade which is an exact replica of South India Hindu Temples. This temple is the residence from where the God is taken on an elaborately decorated chariot to the Waterfall Temple on Thai Pūṣam Day."

This extract is from the book *Penang Calling* published by Happy Store, Penang, 1961.

One feature of Thai Pūṣam in Penang is that the Chinese break 2 to 3 thousand coconuts during the 5.4. K. M. long procession of Lord Subramanya. They arrange them properly and display them artistically at the pavement.

The very poor among the Chinese collect the pieces of broken coconuts for consumption. The Police and Municipal staff clean the place within a few minutes, remove each and every bit of the broken shell and absorb the coconut water with dust cloth. 'How good it will be if we can imitate them here in India?'

The participation of the Chinese in Kāvadi dance etc., and their identification with the festival is so complete that, one can mistake them for Tamil-speaking Hindus of Indian nationality.

Elaborate arrangements are made by various organs of Government for the success of the festival. The Electricity Department goes all out to help illuminate the chariot. All traffic is diverted. Banks are closed for the day.

The Śiva Temple at Penang built by a Gurkha who was serving in the British Army has been handed over to Chettiars for management. Brahmin priests are appointed to conduct pūjas.

Chettiars have endowed heavily and have extended and enlarged the temple.

I may draw your attention to Mr. M. Nadarajan's brief paper. 'The Nāṭṭukkōṭṭai Chettiar community in South East-Asia'. It does not deal with religion at length; but it does not avoid mention of Chettiar contributions in this field. It has been published in the *Proceedings of the First International Conference - Seminar of Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur, April, 1966*, Vol. I, K. L. April 1969, pp. 251-260.

### THAILAND

Chettiars have been connected with Thailand since 1860.

Walking along Silom road, the nerve centre of Bangkok City, one can find a South Indian temple gōpuram - that of an 80 year old Māriamman Temple.

In an article in *The Hindu*, Sunday, April 4, 1971, entitled *Māriamman Temple in Bangkok*, Mr. K. R. N. Swamy writes:—

"I asked the priest who is from Mayuram taluk of Tamil Nādu, as to how the temple came to be built in the heart of Bangkok. He said that the Chettiyar community which had settled in Bangkok in the last decades of the 19th century had asked the then King of Siam, King Chaulangkorn, for a piece of land to build the temple. The King, as a munificent gesture, granted the present site tax-free. In those days the temple was far away from the King's palace and city centre. But, to-day the city has expanded so much that the 12,000 sq. feet occupied by the temple is among the most costly property in Bangkok.

This temple has had a very colourful existence. Once the compound of the temple covered a much larger area of Silom road. But in 1942, when the Japanese occupied the city of Bangkok, they found the vast compound of the temple blocking their city planning and they arbitrarily built a wall, thus restricting the area of the temple.

Formerly, the Indian community in Bangkok, mainly South Indians, used to come regularly to the temple. But now many have left for South India and the Indian devotees number barely sixty, most of them officials of the United Nations offices at Bangkok.

One welcome feature of the temple is the way the temple authorities have harmonised it with the local religion. Near the sanctum are huge Buddha images covered with gold gilt. In another corner the images of Lord Kṛṣṇa and other members of the Hindu pantheon are worshipped. In the enclosures outside the main temple many images of South Indian village deities like Kāthavarāyan are kept.

One peculiar feature is the way devotees come to it to foresee their luck. After some rituals, the priest asks the worshipper to pull out a card from a stock kept below the deity. This card is supposed to tell his luck for the ensuing twelve months. As I was talking to the priest I found many Siamese and Chinese worshippers bowing before the main door and walking away. Many Siamese women came inside the shrine and went away after worship. Among other devotees were some Chinese artisans.

Mystified, I asked the priest to explain the meaning of these foreigners worshipping the Hindu Goddess. He replied that they considered the goddess as the Universal Mother and that their respect was not in any way less than that of Indians.

Inside the temple is a silver chariot, in which the deity is taken around by Siamese worshippers during Daśara. On the 10th day of Daśara the goddess is kept on a silver throne and worshipped with great ceremony. On other ceremonial days a silver vehicle (vāhanam) is used and it is taken around the temple precincts.

For the Chinese the most important day is the New Year, and the temple is literally crowded with Chinese devotees. Besides being in the centre of the business district, all local businessmen come to the temple before opening and closing major deals.

Ten years ago, the temple authorities built a choultry inside the temple compound for visitors. The monthly income of the temple is more than Rs. 1,000 and the yearly income nearly Rs. 20,000. But years of tropical weather have damaged the temple and two years ago some expert sculptors were taken from South India to carry out repairs. The priests are from South India and this Indian temple is a landmark in modern Bangkok.

This is the only account available.

As against this, a view is held that Chettiars could not have built a temple for Goddess Māriamman in preference to their favourite God, Murugan alias Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi. The second point made out is that unlike the Chettiar temples in South-East Asia, this one is not maintained by the Chettiars.

The answers are simple. The Chettiar Community in Bangkok was never numerically large. The maximum number of business-houses was less than a score. They had a chapel or worship-room in one of them. At the peak (boom) period of activity, the thought of erecting a temple occurred to them and they approached the ruler who generously donated the land.

At the blue-print stage, business perhaps was slack due to the economic depression and the community may have taken note of the fact that they had 'local' families too! Also, there was a large Tamil community of Padayāchis, who with their village-background and folk-culture wanted a temple for Goddess Māriamman. Evidently the Chettiars agreed to the use of the land for such construction and in its evolution to the present structure, Chettiar contribution cannot be ruled out, according to Mr. R. V. Than of Indian Overseas Bank, Bangkok. (Letter to me dated 10th September 1971).

After all, the Chettiars are not anti-Māriamman; in Chettinād they have donated liberally to the Māriamman temple at Konniyūr (Koppanapatti) and still undertake strenuous marches on pilgrimage to the temple. In Kuala Lumpur, the Chettiars participate in the affairs of the Māriamman temple by bearing the expenses for a part of the festival.

The book published by the Māriammān Temple-management in Bangkok in 1951 in Tamil and written by one Mr. Adaikappa Chettiar does not give an insight into the origin of the temple. It is neither scientific in treatment nor historical in fact. All that is available in this book is that "it was built about 100 years or so ago by Tamilians who lived here."

The second point is even more easily answered. Most Chettiar temples in Burma are not managed by Chettiars now, since they have quit the country. The same may be true of Bangkok. In Malaysia, not all the temples managed by Chettiars are Chettiar-sponsored. Perhaps, Bangkok's is a case in reverse.

The subject is worth further research and investigation.

### *SOUTH VIET-NAM*

South Viet-Nam is a land of Buddhists ruled by Christians. In the capital town - Saigon - the Chettiars have built a temple for Daṇḍāyuthāpani in about 1880 and endowed it adequately.

There are four services daily. Thiru Kārthigai is celebrated. On Thai Pūṣam day, the deity is taken in procession on a chariot which was made in and brought from India in 1931.

On Mondays, the Chettiar community of Saigon assemble at the temple, hold a common prayer and read *Śiva Purāṇam*. They celebrate the days of Saints Sambandar, Sundarar and Thirunāvuk-karaṣar, the Thēvaram trio, St. Māṇikkavāchakar of Thiruvāchakam fame and Dakṣhināmūrthy Swāmigal of Thiruvārur. On all these days, the poor are fed on a large scale.

The Chettiar community of Saigon finances the activities of the Dakṣhināmūrthy Swāmigal Mutt at Thiruvārur.

The Chettiar temple at Saigon is 250' long and 150' broad. It is one of the tourist attractions of Saigon. Viet-Nameese and non-Viet-Nameese alike sought shelter in the temple during the B. 29 bombings in 1939.

The jewels and real estate of the temple were valued at Rs. five crores in Indian money in 1971.



The Chettiar community in Saigon has been generous in supporting projects for renovation of Buddhist shrines.

During the economic depression of the early 1930s austerity measures were in force in Saigon and so the Chettiar community celebrated the Thai Pūṣam festival within the temple precincts. The monies thus saved were turned over to social welfare projects for the benefit of the Viet Nameese.

### INDONESIA

The sea-coast of Indonesia is just 1250 miles from Madras and this is only as distant as Amritsar is from Madras.

Chettiars are said to have gone there to deal in corals and pearls long before they went to Malaysia. The merchant is referred to, in Bahāṣha Indonesia (Indonesian language) as 'Chetty'; for 'coral' and 'pearl', the words used are the Tamil 'Pavaḷam and 'Muththu'.

Indonesia is full of Hindu temples of old and so Chettiars did not have the need to build new ones. The only temple they have constructed is the Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi Temple in Maidan—Dilli, the capital of Sumatra. The fixed deity (mūlavar) is said to be made of white stone since granite is not available in Indonesia. The festival deity is in bronze.

Two services are performed daily by a Paṇḍāram priest and the Thai Pūṣam is a great event when the Lord is taken in procession on a wooden chariot along the main avenues—Jal Hind, Jal Masjid, Keśavan etc. Poor feeding is an important adjunct to the festival. All the Indians in Indonesian Government service get a holiday on Thai Pūṣam day. The temple is lavishly endowed with jewellery and with real estate, the rental income meeting the maintenance cost of the temple.

The temple was built in 1890. The contract for its construction was taken up by one Kumarasamy Chettiar. Arriving in Indonesia under difficult circumstances, he amassed wealth after constructing this temple. He rose to a high position in the

Indonesian Government service. He thought that it was all due to the grace of Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi; so he decided to put up a temple for Daṇḍāyuthapāṇi in his home-town of Chinnalapatti in Madurai District after retirement. He took up the work in 1905; but died next year. A faithful grandson of his, Dr. G. S. Kumarasamy of Mint Street, Madras, completed it in 1964 and the result is the now famous Shri Subramanyaswāmi Temple known for the miraculous occurrence of *Jyothi*.

I have raced against time and tried to cover as much as can be done in an hour. I request you to forgive me for my shortcomings.

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